Healthcare Not Airfare! Art, Abortion and Political Agency in Ireland

Sydney Calkin

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Ireland's near-total abortion ban was, in effect, a policy of offshoring abortions. Before the May 2018 vote to repeal it, the 8th Amendment allowed for conservative and nationalist groups to celebrate the idea of Ireland as an 'abortion-free' territory, while forcing women to travel to England for abortion or self-manage abortions with illegal pills at home. Artists in the Irish pro-choice movement have contested the public silence around abortion and abortion-travel; in doing so they have disrupted the political narrative of 'abortion-free Ireland' by symbolically re-placing Irish abortion seekers in public spaces. These place-based artistic interventions have larger significance for the changing relationship between women, reproduction, and the state. Drawing on ongoing debates in critical and feminist geopolitics, this article addresses the relationship between geopolitics, art, and political agency to theorize the role of pro-choice Irish artworks in challenging the enforced silence that surrounded abortion travel. It builds on geographical engagement with Jacques Rancière to address the feminist geopolitics critique of geopolitical scales and sites of 'serious' geopolitics. The article examines three artworks that depict Irish women's experiences of abortion-related travel to England as part of the larger political campaign for liberalization of Ireland's abortion laws.

Abortion; Ireland; Art; Rancière; Protest

Introduction

Women's lives, bodies, and experiences are largely invisible in dominant geopolitical scripts. This is a manufactured invisibility, and one that can be countered by insisting on re-placing women in the narrative. In the words of Cynthia Enloe's famous provocation: "Paying serious attention to women can expose *how much power* it takes to maintain the international political system in its present form" (Enloe 1990, 3, emphasis added). Although women's bodies are "inherently caught up in international relations", they are not written into its texts (Dowler and Sharp 2001, 168). Exposing the absence of women from geopolitics can show us how political structures are intimately bound up with gender inequalities and how they depend on the normalization of such inequalities. Geopolitical power structures are enacted through women's bodies, while simultaneously constructing a spatial and conceptual separation between the public sphere of geopolitics (masculine) and the private sphere of home (feminine).

The politics of abortion in Ireland vividly illustrate this paradox. Ireland's near-total abortion ban has been made politically sustainable through a compromise: if they have the necessary financial resources and travel documents, Irish women can legally travel abroad for abortion. For decades, this compromise was relatively stable. Pro-life and conservative nationalist forces could celebrate "abortion-free" Ireland, while the steady flow of abortion-seekers across the border meant that the Irish state could avoid the disastrous consequences for maternal mortality that usually follow from restrictive abortion laws. A "hidden diaspora" of somewhere between 170,000 and 205,000 Irish women have travelled to England for abortion since 1970 (Rossiter 2009; Sheldon 2016). In recent years, the political compromise to push Irish abortions offshore has fractured amidst mounting public pressure to liberalize abortion laws. After the government's own citizen-led consultation body overwhelmingly voted to recommend liberalizing the existing abortion laws, a referendum on the 8th Amendment of the Irish constitution was called for May 2018. By 66.4% to 33.6%, the electorate voted to repeal the amendment which had held, since its insertion in 1983, that the pregnant women and fetus had equal right to life in the eyes of the Irish state.

Ireland's abortion ban, and its history of offshoring abortions, was more than a policy choice: it formed part of a larger geopolitical narrative to perform state power through the control of reproduction. This article addresses the role of art and artists in challenging this discourse and exposing the state violence done to women who are forced to travel abroad for healthcare.

Artists in the Irish pro-choice movement have used public artworks to disrupt the invisibilities around abortion: by contesting the silence that surrounds women's abortion experiences, as well as the displacement of abortion-seekers from Ireland, they have disrupted the political narrative of "abortion-free Ireland" by symbolically re-placing the issue in Irish territory and public space. In short, they have translated activist demands for "healthcare, not airfare" into public performances that foreground the relationship between women, reproduction, and the state. Drawing on ongoing debates in critical and feminist geopolitics, this article addresses the relationship between geopolitics, art, and political agency to theorize the role of pro-choice Irish artworks in challenging the enforced silence that surrounded abortion travel. It builds on geographical engagements with Jacques Rancière to examine the effects of artwork in asserting women's (geo)political agency and contesting their marginalization from political narratives.

The argument is structured as follows: in Section One, I outline the critical geopolitics scholarship and its engagement with Rancière, to argue that this scholarship is still missing the key insights of feminist geopolitics on the need to de-center state security and interweave global and local scales in order to see the everyday of geopolitics. A feminist geopolitics engagement with Rancière, I show, can help us to advance the feminist aim of contesting the invisibilities of gender in geopolitics and identifying alternative sites of lived resistance to dominant geopolitical narratives. In Section Two, I use the case of Ireland and its abortion policy to demonstrate the aesthetic and gendered dimensions of geopolitics. Ireland's abortion ban and history of offshoring abortion has been essential to its geopolitical identity as a 'morally distinctive' Catholic bastion in a secularizing world. In Section Three, I use a discussion of works from the Irish pro-choice art movement to illustrate the ways that art can function as the practice of feminist geopolitics. I argue that these artworks disrupt the dominant aesthetic of abortion politics by re-centring the agency of pregnant woman; they illustrate the corporeal and gendered basis of state performances of sovereignty; and they stage public interventions that call attention to the intermingling of global and local in everyday life. My task here is to extend the critical geopolitical scholarship on art, aesthetics, and geopolitics by bringing it into conversation with feminist geopolitics, and to argue that Rancière's account of art as politics has a special resonance with feminist geopolitics' insistence on seeing geopolitics in a greater range of sites, exposing the agency of marginalized political actors, and contesting the hierarchy of global-local.

In the article, I discuss three artworks created between 2012 and 2016 in Ireland: a performance work titled "Metronome" by the Perform for Choice Collective, a travelling exhibition titled "Out of the Shadows" by Will St Leger, and a collaborative workshop titled "Case Studies" by Siobhán Clancy and Cathie Doherty. These works were chosen because the artists behind them are closely associated with the pro-choice movement, their visual style characterizes the changing rhetoric of that movement, and they directly intervene in public spaces with pro-choice messages about abortion-travel with the expressed aim of de-stigmatizing it.[1] Methodologically, the analysis here is based on interviews with artists, reviews and academic writing about the works, and my own interpretation of and experience with encountering the work. Following Williams (2014), this approach allows for an analysis that draws on the artist's own vision for the work, its reception by others, and the audience's experience of the work.

Geopolitics as Aesthetics

Geographers' study of aesthetics and politics illustrates the substantive role that art plays in social and political life and its potential to "remake spaces, place and human relationships" (de Leeuw and Hawkins 2017, 306-7). This mode of investigation, influenced by the work of Jacques Rancière, is powerful because it insists that aesthetics is inseparable from politics and that political power is bound up in regimes of visibility (and invisibility). For Rancière, politics must be understood as constructing and normalizing an aesthetic, meaning a particular arrangement of the world that sets boundaries on our sensory experience and limits what can be seen, heard, spoken, or felt. Aesthetic regimes are maintained and normalized through the production of visibilities which serve to "institute and stabilize" various forms of inequality while rendering alternatives unthinkable (Ingram 2016, 4). However, the production of visibilities also means the production of invisibilities. While aesthetic practices render our reality comprehensible by providing a shared set of meanings for processing experiences, they deliberately exclude other meanings and experiences. Rancière terms this the "partition of the sensible", to connote the separation of "visible and invisible, audible and inaudible, speech and noise" (2009, 31). An aesthetic regime imparts a shared sense of reality, but it also obscures alternative, more egalitarian, ways of living.

[1] The works discussed in this article represent only a small fraction of the rich body of Irish pro-choice art; they are chosen specifically because of their resonance with a feminist geopolitics account of gender and geopolitical identity. For a discussion of other works in this movement, see O'Hara 2018; NicGhabhann 2018; Clancy and Campbell forthcoming)

Politics, for Rancière, is not embodied by elections, political parties, or bureaucratic institutions: it is a radical and disruptive force that contests the dominant aesthetic regime and challenges what can be said, seen, felt or experienced. This kind of politics means a disruption of the dominant order that brings new voices and interests into conflict. If power hierarchies and inequalities are normalized by a dominant aesthetic, politics is a transgressive activity that exposes the artificiality of this regime; it is, "before all else, is an intervention in the visible and the sayable" (Rancière 2010, 37). Art has radical potential to intervene in this capacity. Because it rearranges objects, takes them out of their ordinary domains, and re-places them in new contexts, it intervenes in "the general distribution of ways of 'doing and making' (Rancière 2013, 8) to create an alternative distribution of the sensible and alternative sensory experiences. Art can unmask inequality through visual practices that "actively disturb" existing modes of representation and present a challenge to the dominant order (Tolia-Kelly 2018, 3). Interventions into sensory experience can stabilize, or challenge, prevailing ways of seeing the world; in doing so, they can offer alternative ways to imagine the organization of the world. This orientation to art understands art as the practice of politics, rather than a commentary on political issues, because art that challenges dominant aesthetics interjects in the normal modes of sensory experience with a range of voices that are normally excluded (Dixon 2009). By offering alternative aesthetic regimes, art-as-politics causes a rupture in the fabric of the ordinary and points to the existence of alternative ways of living and being.

Rancière's account of art as a transgressive political intervention has inspired a body of work in critical geopolitics that theorizes the role of art in challenging and disrupting powerful geopolitical narratives. It starts from the premise that geopolitics can also be understood as an aesthetic regime, insofar as it divides up the world and its people to limit what can be sensed, seen, said, or acted upon (Ingram 2016, 4). By understanding geopolitics as an aesthetic regime that reproduces and normalizes global inequalities and forms of political violence, critical geopolitics work looks to Rancière's account of art as a disruptive force that can expose the processes that maintain such inequalities and suggest a different way to see the world. Conceptually, this literature offers two main ways to understand the emancipatory potential of art in geopolitics: first, that art can disrupt the repetitions and rituals of state power and second, that it can create a juxtaposition to challenge the spatial separation of the self and the other.

State claims to power acquire a sense of legitimacy or permanence through their layered repetitions and position within accepted frames of reference. As such, art that intervenes in these rituals can expose the artificiality of state power. The production and enforcement of borders, for instance, is a kind of performance of sovereignty and security that acquires power from the "repetitive sequences" of calculation and authorization (Amoore and Hall 2010, 3; see also Williams 2014). Artworks and installations at the border can expose state territorial practices as a form of theatre, staging theatrical interventions into border space to reveal the rituals that *perform* security and to reclaim the border as a different kind of 'public' space (Amoore and Hall 2010). Similarly, art can challenge the imaginative geographies of the self and the other that enforce a geographical distance between 'our' space of peace and 'their' space of war (Gregory 2010, 177). Such a geographical separation is translated into a moral geography of grievable deaths and distant spaces of abstracted violence. Art that challenges this distinction does so by introducing a "radical and contrapuntal remixing" of imaginative geographies that folds spaces into a simultaneous experience (Ingram 2009, 267-8, 2012, 2016; Gregory 2010; Lewicki 2017; Brickell 2012). When art intervenes in the dominant aesthetic regime of war and peace, it does so by challenging the representational modes that have come to normalize, legitimize, and sanitize violence. It offers an alternative experience that breaks with the expected ways of seeing, feeling, and speaking about war.

Geopolitics, as Alan Ingram argues, is itself an aesthetic regime that divides up the world and its people "to limit what can be sensed, seen, said, or acted upon" (Ingram 2016, 4). Reading Rancière's account of art as disruptive politics through feminist geopolitics can show us something different: art that intervenes the geopolitical space can be understood as a disruption of sensory experience that exposes the gendered norms and hierarchies that underpin dominant geopolitical power structures. Such a critique takes aim at existing geopolitical narratives, but also implicates geopolitics scholarship that sustains a hierarchical and disembodied vision of the "real work" of geopolitics (Dixon 2015; Pain 2015). This conceptual and spatial hierarchy is, at times, reproduced in the critical geopolitics scholarship which maintains a focus on the traditional sites of geopolitics: militarism, security architecture, border zones, and inter-state political violence (Massaro and Williams 2013; Fluri 2009). In doing so, it tends to reproduce assumptions about *legitimate* sites of geopolitical inquiry and *authoritative* subjects of geopolitical agency. Against this, feminist geopolitics "de-centers" but does not dismiss the conventional sites of state security; it interjects to argue that the political dynamics that shape state security institutions operate at "coarser and finer" scales than the state and in sites less

overtly associated with the performance of state monopoly over violence (Hyndman 2001). In particular, these dynamics operate at the level of the gendered body and through the normalization of particular gender norms, relations, and inequalities.

What can a feminist account of geopolitics-as-aesthetics offer us? Feminist geopolitical and Rancierian accounts share an emphasis on the political power of the rupture, both to disrupt existing modes of operation and to signal the potential for emancipatory alternatives. Artistic interventions that alter the distribution of the sensible do so by challenging the regime of visibilities and invisibilities. Feminist geopolitics is conceptually committed to the same project, interpolating the 'small' scale of the everyday with the 'grand' scale of the geopolitical and thereby exposing the reliance of the geopolitical on the control of the intimate and everyday (Pain 2009; Dowler and Sharp 2001). Feminist geopolitics poses the challenge of alternative mappings of geopolitics power, which de-centre traditional sites of political violence and envision geopolitical power resting at a greater range of scales. It is especially interested in the embodied experience of life in "fleshy bodies" ,which are acted upon by geopolitical forces but also "negotiate and transform" the spaces they inhabit (Dixon and Marston 2011, 445). The conventional conceptual separation between the intimate and the geopolitical is enforced spatially, through the longstanding association between femininity, domestic life, and the private sphere (as contrasted with masculinity, political life, and the public sphere) (Sharp 2007). Such a conceptual separation is socially constructed, and indeed performative, because it hides the connections between the intimate and the geopolitical. Engaging with Rancière on the transgressive and disruptive social force of art, we can imagine the translation of such feminist geopolitical arguments into a politics of place-based action that intervenes in and claims public spaces to expose the entanglement of scales. As such, Rancière's account can help us to understand how artworks act as the practice of feminist geopolitics, staging interventions that illustrate the way that geopolitical fictions are inscribed on bodies. Art's powers to disrupt, transform, and offer alternative aesthetic practices provide us with new ways to think about the aesthetic practices that normalize and embed this marginalization of gender in geopolitics, as well as the modes of resistance that could be articulated.

The Political Fiction of 'Abortion-Free' Ireland

The nation-state is symbolically constructed through ideas about women, family, and sex: the language and iconography of the nation is replete with gendered metaphors about the need to defend motherland against violation and ensure the nation's honour by protecting the sexual purity of its women (Yuval Davis 1997). This relationship also extends beyond the metaphorical. As feminist geopolitical scholarship shows us, "individual bodies and bodily potentialities *literally* become expressions of geopolitical space and authority" (Jones and Sage 2010, 316, emphasis added). The Irish case exposes the material realities of these gendered discourses: Ireland's *de facto* abortion ban can be understood as a geopolitical aesthetic that sought to maintain moral and political claims about Irishness by offshoring abortions and displacing abortion seekers. Since the 1980s, abortion politics have become a staging ground for the assertion of an Irish national identity, both through domestic legislation and international law (Smyth 2005; Fletcher 2002; Side 2011). They formalize a geopolitical discourse that positions Ireland as a morally superior "abortion-free" territory and a safe haven for pro-life politics.

The narrative of 'abortion-free Ireland' must be understood in the broader context of Irish state and identity-formation processes, because anti-abortion politics have long been association with claims about Ireland's 'moral distinctiveness' in relation to Britain and the European Union. Abortion in Ireland cannot be understood without reference to its trans-national geography: the formal establishment of the right to travel for abortion only served to formalize the Ireland-England "abortion corridor"– that had been serving as an informal route for women seeking abortion since the 1930s (Smyth 2005; Rossiter 2009).[2] Anti-abortion campaigns (and the 1983 campaign to add the 8th amendment in particular) emerged from nationalist narratives that purportedly sought the preservation of Irish Catholicism and conservatism, perceived as threatened by the secularizing forces of globalization and Europeanization. This reflects a distinctive anti-colonial and pro-natalist nationalism, because Irish nationalist narratives on abortion have historically drawn on a distinction between Irishness (pro-life) and Britishness (pro-choice) (Smyth 2005; Fletcher 2002, 2007). For this reason, the notion that Ireland is 'abortion-free' signals more than a conservative attitude to abortion: it enforces a broader claim

[2] Although a fuller discussion exceeds the scope of this article, it is essential to note that the maintenance of sexual and gender norms in Ireland has historically been bound up with cross-border movement. The Irish state-sanctioned sexual regime has historically been maintained through territorial strategies, through which deviance from dominant moral codes was "solved by emigration" by women with unwanted pregnancies, as well as LGBT people, interracial and cross-religious couples, and victims of sexual abuse (Luibheid 2013, 37; see also Luibheid 2000).

to the geopolitical position of Ireland as a bastion of moral conservatism and the 'final frontier' for anti-abortion policies in Europe. This sits in a broader global context because the anti-choice movement in Ireland receives significant financial and tactical support from the American anti-abortion movement, which sees Ireland as its "last stand" in Europe where abortion laws are generally liberalizing (Nagle 2013). Abortion is a powerful political signifier in the Irish context, because it sits at the centre of wider debates about national identity, religion, the family, and the exercise of political power to maintain control over these institutions.

"Abortion-free Ireland" is a political fiction, but a carefully maintained and costly national one that has been actively enforced and re-produced by minimizing abortion-travel figures or associating abortion-travel with Englishness. Defenders of the 8th Amendment argue that it causes Irish women to have fewer abortions per capita than British women. They claim that Ireland's restrictive laws have saved the lives of "some 196,000 Irish citizens" since 1994 (see, for example, Love Both n.d.; Pro Life Campaign 2016). Since 2001, the number of Irish women travelling for abortion has fallen steeply, a drop which corresponds to more women obtaining illegal abortion pills inside Ireland (Sheldon 2016); the Save the 8th Campaign, however, interprets this as evidence of Ireland's 'abortion free' status, arguing that the decline in reported abortion-travellers means these women chose to stay in Ireland and carry their pregnancies to term (Save the 8th n.d.). Campaign posters from the pro-life movement in the 2018 referendum asked voters to keep the 8th amendment by drawing contrasts with the prevalence of abortion in England. Numerous posters around the country provided statistics on abortion in England, pleading: "Don't let that happen here" and "Don't bring this to Ireland" (Save the 8th, 2018). Irish abortions do happen, of course, although most of them take place outside of Irish territory. The myth of an abortion-free Ireland has also been perpetuated through the misleading use of medical statistics to equate abortion restrictions with healthy mothers (see O'Toole 2015; MacGuill 2015). Pro-life groups argue that the 8th Amendment is responsible for Ireland's lower maternal mortality rates because they equate fewer abortions with fewer maternal deaths (see, for example, Love Both n.d.). The narrative of 'abortion-free Ireland' depends on the assumption that abortions do not take place in Irish territory, but also that Ireland's fetal citizens are saved from abortion by the state's laws.

Such a narrative is undermined by the daily flow of Irish women who travel abroad for abortion, as well as the official recognition of Irish abortions that take place in English clinics, for which

data is collected by the state Health Service Executive Crisis Pregnancy Programme. When Irish women access abortion in English clinics, their nationality is recorded by proxy by the home address they provide; this data is collected and published by the UK Department of Health and, although it almost certainly underestimates the number of Irish abortion-seekers in England, this data is recognized by parts of the Irish state. The resulting dissonance between the denial of Irish abortions and the collection of information on Irish abortions is not the result of a policy contradiction, but a deliberate strategy of governance that allows for the maintenance of unsustainable health care gaps by relying on services abroad (Fletcher 2013). Similarly, increasing access to abortion inside Ireland with illegal abortion pills obtained through online networks has been met with a "choreographed official ignorance" by the Irish police and criminal justice system (Sheldon 2018, 20; 2016). Both forms of abortion access remain deeply stigmatized, and the silence around them sustains the narrative of 'abortion free Ireland' even as it plainly demonstrates the everyday lived experience of Irish abortion. By forcing Irish abortion-seekers abroad, the state was long able to stave off political pressure to liberalize its laws, avoid major public health effects on maternal health, shore up nationalist discourses about the moral distinctiveness of Catholic Ireland, and sustain the social stigma around abortion by geographically displacing its practice. Activist mobilization for reform has therefore sought to expose these contradictions and disrupt the stability of its political fiction.

Art and Abortion Travel

Geopolitical narratives normalize a particular organization of the world, and as such they give legitimacy to moral geographies that are based on "palpable inclusions and exclusions" (Tolia-Kelly 2018, 5). A moral geography of Irishness is enacted and reproduced through the spatial displacement of Irish abortion-seekers who leave the country each day in pursuit of abortion care. The political and social marginalization of abortion-travel sustains the myth of 'abortion-free Ireland' and the claims to a moral distinctiveness in Europe that form the basis for policies to restrict reproductive freedom. Rancière's account of art and politics is essential for understanding the role that Irish artists play in political struggles over the issue of abortion. His account of politics-aesthetics as creating an economy of visibilities and invisibilities invites an understanding of art as a transgressive mode of political action and mechanism for asserting political agency.

In the remainder of the article, I discuss three pieces of Irish pro-choice art: "Metronome", "Out of the Shadows", and "Case Studies". "Metronome" is a performance by the Irish Perform for Choice collective, staged during 2012-2013 at Dublin airport, train stations, and ferry terminal (Clancy et al. 2012; Clancy 2014b). In "Metronome", a small group of women wearing red coats and rolling small suitcases behind them move in a choreographed trail around and across the public walkways of these transportation hubs. Each woman has a suitcase or backpack with her, carrying a large baggage tag on the front that advertises the fictional airline "AerAbortabroad" and contains the name and airport code for a destination in the UK. As they move through the space, the performers' movements are at times highly coordinated and take the form of recognizable set-pieces, while at other times they disperse; at the end of the performance they remove their red coats and walk in separate directions, fading into the crowd. The second work, "Out of the Shadows", created by Will St Leger, was commissioned by the Abortion Rights Campaign as part of their campaign to repeal the 8th amendment. Over the course of a six-day tour in 2017, it was installed in six cities and towns across Ireland. The work consists of life-sized black silhouettes of women with rolling suitcases which are placed at bus stops, in town centres, and in various other public spaces. The third work, "Case Studies" is a participatory artwork led by Siobhán Clancy and Cathie Doherty in 2013. At a drop-in workshop in Dublin, Clancy and Doherty collaborated with women who had experienced abortion travel or were planning to make a trip: the artists provided cardboard suitcases and invited each participant to decorate and pack a case with "memorabilia, crafts, art pieces and artefacts" that they might bring or that represented their feelings about their experience of abortion-travel (Clancy 2014: 66). After the workshop, the cases were displayed in the window of an arts space in Dublin.

Following Rancière, I argue that these artworks below do not simply comment on the current laws, but actively disrupt the realities produced by the political status quo and expose the artificiality of the power relations that govern our lives. The works discussed below are relatively small-scale and place-based interventions in Irish abortion politics, but they illustrate three ways that art's disruption of geopolitical aesthetic regimes can answer the challenge of feminist geopolitics. First, they articulate an alternative aesthetic of abortion politics in Ireland by breaking with existing modes of representation and centring the experience of abortion-travel abroad. Second, they make a public claim to political agency on behalf of abortion-seekers whose collective power is diffused by social stigma and political marginalization. Third, they unmask the gendered production of state borders by staging protests at sites

associated with domestic and international travel, thereby calling attention to the intertwined scales of geopolitics, where the everyday lives of women are intimately connected to state-level policy choices and discourses.

Embodying Abortion-Travel

Art's disruption of the dominant aesthetic occurs when it breaks with existing frames of reference and provides an alternative range of possibilities. Because it "suspend[s] the ordinary coordinates of sensory experience" to re-frame relationships, artwork can mould and re-arrange the visible in transformative ways (Rancière 2002, n.p. quoted in Dixon 2009, 412). In Irish pro-choice art, this re-arrangement of the sensible takes place through an alternative visual style that associates abortion with the sensory experience of travel, and the emotional burden carried by women who make involuntary abortion journeys. This poses a challenge to the dominant aesthetic of abortion politics: the anti-choice movement has long sought to frame the debate over abortion rights through emotive photos of bloodied embryos and fetuses, in which pregnant women are visually reduced to disembodied wombs (Morgan and Michaels 1999). Anti-choice groups around Ireland routinely display large, graphic, and often photo-shopped images of aborted foetuses at protests (Barry 2015). Such photographic images are essential to the anti-choice movement, because they mobilize visceral disgust at the abortion procedure and a sense of protection over the fetus, whose personhood has been socially imagined through advances in photographic technology and the political uses of these images (Berlant 1997; Sanger 2017). As a corollary, these images of a free-floating fetus tend to erase and disembody pregnant women who are reduced to empty womb space.

By contrast, "Out of the Shadows", "Metronome" and "Case Studies" effectively re-signify the abortion debate by representing abortion as a process of involuntary travel for Irish women. The works depict abortion as a lived experience of women in the community, whose abortion journeys are hidden beneath social stigma and enforced silences that ask them to bear the burden in secret. The suitcase is the central motif here: these works use it to reject the visual style of pregnant woman as disembodied belly. "Metronome" and "Out of the Shadows" feature suitcases rolling behind each woman to signal her journey, while "Case Studies" uses the suitcase as a canvas on which women can represent their experience of abortion-travel. In "Case Studies", participants reflected on their abortion experiences as a private process of planning, packing and travelling. They filled their cardboard cases with menstrual pads, hot

water bottles, pregnancy tests, toothpaste, blood-stained underwear, and anti-depressant pills. Their cases also include the paraphernalia of international travel, including passports and information leaflets on their destinations in Britain. For each case, participants made baggage tags describing the contents of the case and their emotions around the trip. One such tag reflects on the secrecy and ambiguity that define this journey which takes the outward form of a holiday for leisure, and yet consists of an emotionally burdensome trip to access medical care:

"Choosing Choice: Packing Up Abortion Stigma
We're both going on a Not-a-Holiday
Scheduling annual leave and holiday pay
Counting the hours and days
The pounds and cents
Waiting, anxiously
'Looking Forward' to our
ABORTION/ HOLIDAY
Seeing the sights: inside the clinic" (see Clancy 2014)

The aesthetic regime that dominates abortion politics valorizes pregnancy, and by extension an abstract idea of motherhood, but generally does so in ways that disembody pregnant woman as "containers" for fetal life, whose health and life are secondary (Hartouni 1997, 41-2). This style resonates with broader geopolitical scripts that glorify mothers who reproduce the nation, both biologically and culturally, through paternalistic narratives that emphasize protection and control (Collins 1998; Yuval Davis 1997). Such fetishization of pregnancy and childbirth gestures at embodiment, but in a way that tends to essentialize women's role in the family and sanction her reproductive role in a patriarchal family structure. An emancipatory account of embodiment insists that women are agentive, "embodied *political subjects*" rather than disembodied casualties of war, or in this case, merely passive reproductive bodies (Hyndman 2007, 42). Works like "Case Studies" offer such an account of embodiment: rather than imagining a pregnant woman as a vessel for fetus, it uses the suitcase as a metaphor for the sensory experience of the pregnant woman's journey. The suitcase has become one of the most important "sticky symbols" in Irish pro-choice art (see NicGhabhann 2018). It represents the embodied sensation of carrying a secret, while outwardly projecting an illusion of normalcy, especially when it is used as a potent political symbol in everyday spaces. In the airport, everyone carries a suitcase: who is going on a holiday? Who is going on a "Not-a-Holiday"?

As a disruption of the dominant aesthetic that governs abortion politics, the artists' rejection of the pregnant belly opens up the possibility for a more complex form of embodiment that takes seriously the sensory experience of abortion travel.

Political Agency and Public Space

In Rancière's account, transgressive artistic interventions disrupt the status quo to expose inequalities and assert the political agency of marginalized groups. The central dimension of this disruption is a declaration that alternative political agents exist: this means more than intensified debate or negotiation by established parties, because it involves the assertion of the existence of marginalized political agents who have been excluded from view (Dikec 2005, 178). This dynamic captures the key mode of transgression that "Metronome" and "Out of the Shadows" affect. Instead of contesting abortion politics on the familiar ground of whether abortion should be morally or legally permissible, these works interrupt the debate by declaring that Irish abortions exist and Irish women seeking abortion are all around us, although their existence is so often denied. They make place-based claims on public space[3] on behalf of a marginalized constituency. Through aesthetic interventions in the landscape of the town or transport hub, these works use visual cues to present abortion-seeking women as a recognizable group with political agency and political demands.

Irish women travelling for abortion generally travel alone, and often in secret, but "Metronome" and "Out of the Shadows" aim to symbolically unite these women as a group by re-staging part of their journeys and choreographing a set of movements that emphasizes their relationships to each other. They contest the invisibility of abortion seekers through a visual style that identifies these women as a group, anonymous but ubiquitous (see Image 1). This is done, partly, by the things they wear and carry. In "Metronome", the performers signal their affiliation to each other by wearing red coats for the duration of the performance; the colour of their coats deliberately echoes the red skirts worn by the Irish Women Abortion Support Group, who hosted Irish women travelling to England for abortion during the 1980s and 1990s (Clancy 2014b; see also Rossiter 2009). At the end of the performance, the women take off their coats, reveal their ordinary clothing, and walk away from each other until they merge with

[3] The physical spaces of the border checkpoint, airport, or train station are not necessarily 'public' in their ownership but they allow for public access and interaction in their function as transport hubs. These spaces often blur the lines between private/ commercial space, public access, and private/ intimate interactions (Adey 2007).

surrounding crowd. When it was initially performed, the artists reported that few travellers stopped to watch; however, the Collective was asked to re-stage the performance so it could be filmed and distributed online, where it received media coverage in advance of the 2012 March for Choice.[4] Similarly, "Out of the Shadows" provides this anonymity to abortion-seekers by rendering their figures as black silhouettes, but nonetheless provides a visual style that signals their unchosen affinity to each other. It captures the paradoxical *absent presence* of women who travel for abortion, because their journeys take them out of the community and thus out of public view. This work, the artist explains, is designed to capture and contest the "sense of exclusion", "stigma", and "burden of secrecy" that abortion-travellers bear, and to give their absence physical weight through silhouettes that allow abortion-travellers to "inhabit the space" (St Leger quoted in Amnesty International 2017; Cunningham 2017). The representation of abortion-travellers in these works directly challenges the dominant aesthetic of abortion secrecy that is maintained and policed through stigmatization; the women in the involuntary sisterhood of abortion-travellers make their presence known through a visual assertion of their existence and affiliation.

< IMAGE 1 HERE >

Attention to protests that stage political claims often exhibits a bias towards iconic, recognizable, and central places like city squares or government buildings; yet "non-places" and "in between" places are also the sites of meaningful resistance (McGahern 2017). In "Metronome" and "Out of the Shadows", the location of the performances is essential to their disruptive force, because they function as an intervention in the sensory experience of place, thereby destabilizing the meanings associated with the mundanity and anonymity of transportation hubs. The exercise of political agency can take place at many scales: a feminist account of political agency foregrounds these everyday sites where this agency is exercised. "Metronome" manifests this critique by directly intervening in public space to "re-trace the steps" of Irish women travelling abroad for abortion (Clancy 2014b, 12). The performance was initiated as a deliberate response to a public campaign by the confrontational anti-choice group Youth Defence (Campbell and Clancy *forthcoming*). In 2012, Youth Defence mounted a poster campaign across Dublin to advertise an upcoming protest march; their posters, with images of

[4] Interview with an artist in the Perform for Choice Collective, March 2017.

foetuses and pregnant mothers in distress, covered the buses, trains, and public spaces in Dublin (see O'Hara 2018). An artist from the Perform for Choice Collective said that this poster campaign seemed to follow her around the city: it had "taken over" her public space.[5] In response, "Metronome" was created to respond to this takeover of public space and designed to articulate an alternative narrative on behalf of the anonymous women who travel for abortion.

Pro-choice artworks that offer an alternative aesthetic for abortion politics do so by insisting on pregnancy as an embodied and relational experience; by extension, they re-signify obstacles to abortion access as a process of social and physical dislocation that forces abortion-seekers overseas. "Metronome" and "Out of the Shadows" occupy ambivalent "in-between" spaces and re-define them: they rupture the expected experience of place by interjecting to expose the experience of abortion-seekers who are present, but silenced, in these public spaces. "Metronome" unsettles and troubles the associations between international transport hubs travel for holiday and leisure by performing a choreography that highlights the way abortion-travellers are interspersed in the crowds that move through the airport. Similarly, the travellers' silhouettes in "Out of the Shadows" are arranged at bus stops and public squares across the country, including figures positioned at bus stops directly outside hospitals to emphasize Irish women's abandonment by their own healthcare providers (see Image 2). The place-based interventions made in these works give voice to a new kind of politics which rejects the confinement of politics to government buildings, or even to the public square, by re-inserting politics into the space of everyday life.

< IMAGE 2 HERE>

Symbolic Borders

Location is essential to the disruptive function of Irish pro-choice artworks which occupy the airport or bus station to destabilize the meanings associated with that place and interject it with political claims of abortion-seeking women. These artworks take on an additional layer of geopolitical meaning when they make interventions into the border space of the state and

[5] Interview with an artist in the Perform for Choice Collective, March 2017.

deliberately draw attention to the bordering practices that reinforce a particular conception of Irishness through the offshoring of Irish abortions. The assertion of state territoriality involves the social construction of border space and delineation of what belongs inside/ outside of the border. As feminist geopolitics scholarship stresses, this performance of bordering operates through the use of gendered scripts that designate gender relations and social norms as "symbolic border guards" (Yuval Davis 1997, 61). The politics of sexuality and reproduction are used to mark the border, but they are also implicated in the politics of filling such a territory: the body itself is a "geopolitical site" in territorial struggles that instrumentalize reproduction (Smith 2011, 456-7). Reproductive bodies are managed, in more or less coercive ways, to shape the population of the nation and ensure its cultural and biological future.

Artwork in border spaces can expose the fiction of the border as the product of repetitive layered performances of state power. Such interventions disrupt the "settled ways of seeing", in order to imagine "replacing them with something new", although this suggestion of alternative configurations of power is open-ended and non-prescriptive (Amoore and Hall 2006, 11). A feminist geopolitical intervention points to the potential for such artworks to give material form to the interwoven scales of geopolitics, giving physical form to the conceptual rupture that challenges the dominant political aesthetic. The conventional scales of geopolitical analysis must be challenged and reconceptualised: the tendency to rely on grand "globe talk" narratives of geopolitics masks the co-produced nature of scale and the multiplicity of scales between global and intimate (Marston et al 2005; Pain 2009). Such a project of alternative geopolitical scales requires attention to the embodiment of geopolitics, reflective engagement with power and positionality, and commitment to investigating the "the quotidian, the affective and the eccentric" (Pratt and Rosner 2012, 2; Dowler and Sharp 2001). It can demonstrate, in other words, that the geopolitical is personal.

The emancipatory potential of artwork lies in its ability to give corporeal or material form to this conceptual critique of scale, particularly through demonstrating the gendered embodiment of the border where local and global are co-constituted. The artworks in question intervene in the spaces that mark Ireland's external border in order to expose the way that women making abortion journeys become involuntary participants in the performance of state sovereignty and identity. To the extent that the border is visible in the modern state, it is associated with these crossing points where travellers must pass before they can leave the island. In "Metronome" and "Out of the Shadows" the layered repetitions of bordering are re-imagined as the

continuous stream of women crossing this border in search of abortion care. They employ the conventional signs of international travel and re-signify them with forced abortion travel. Suitcases, discussed above, are one such object associated with border-crossing. The performers in Metronome carry additional signifiers of international travel, with their baggage tags (see Image 3). Parodying the Irish-centric branding of Ryanair and Aer Lingus, "AerAbortabroad" boasts of the numbers of abortion-seekers it has exported to the UK since 1980. These works give corporeal weight to the border and the practices of border performance that depend on the exile of abortion-seekers. They also expose the entanglement of nation, state, and gender order by contesting the narrative that Ireland's moral distinctiveness derives from its distance from the practice of abortion. In making this critique of border-crossing of healthcare, however, such a performance re-creates a notable exclusion: refugee and asylum seeker women, among others, lack the international mobility to travel for abortion (see Side 2016). The abortion ban that sustains this narrative of abortion-free Ireland is written everyday through the expulsion of abortion-seekers who cross its border in pursuit of healthcare as well as the imposition of unequal mobility regimes on different groups of women.

<IMAGE 3 HERE>

Performance and artwork at airports and other transport hubs is particularly resonant in Ireland, because these spaces have historically been important sites of pro-choice protest. Ireland's domestic and regional politics mean that access to reproductive freedoms have long been linked with the ability to cross borders and leave the state. In 1971 and again in 2014, Irish feminists broke the state's laws by publicly travelling to Belfast to buy illegal contraceptives (in 1971) and abortion pills (in 2014), staging a protest in Dublin station upon their return (Enright 2014). In 1992, feminist activists protested a High Court ruling blocking a pregnant teenager from travelling to England for abortion by staging a performance at the Dublin airport. Performers set up a mock X-ray machine to 'screen' female passengers boarding flights to England. Pregnant women who were screened were blocked from travelling and taken into 'State' custody (Luibheid 2013, 131). In essence, geopolitical identities are enacted through the maintenance of particular gender regimes and the social discourses that naturalize such regimes. In the case of abortion-travellers, their manufactured invisibility is used to sustain a narrative of the abortion-free state. Feminist art interventions at the border not only seek to expose the fiction of state power, but they offer an embodied critique of gender's symbolic bordering function.

The international system is intimately bound up with particular gender norms and relationships, although it requires a purposeful analysis of women to "expose how much power" it takes to maintain such a geopolitical system and the gender relations that underpin it (Enloe 1990, 3). This mode of investigation asks us to look for the way that the grand global scale of the geopolitical is made across scales of the intimate, everyday, and embodied. What might this orientation to geopolitics look like as a practice of feminist resistance? Taking Irish pro-choice artwork as an empirical site to explore this question, we can see how feminist artworks contest dominant geopolitical scripts through disruption and juxtaposition. In Rancière's account of politics, relations of inequality are maintained and normalized through an aesthetic that sets limits on what can be seen or spoken. Political action ruptures this aesthetic and presents an alternative vision that offers the possibility for a more egalitarian organization of power. Pro-choice artists in Ireland have sought to disrupt the dominant aesthetic of the abortion debate by re-centring the sensory experience and emotional burden of abortion travel abroad. Their works disrupt existing modes of geopolitical identity performance because they re-territorialize Irish abortions and stake a claim for political agency on behalf of women who have travelled for abortions.

Post-Script: After the Eighth

The referendum to repeal the 8th amendment returned a resounding electoral victory for the Irish pro-choice movement, with voters supporting more liberal abortion access by two to one. All but one constituency voted for repeal, as did every age group except voters over 65. Young voters mobilized in impressive numbers: 94% more women ages 18-24 voted in the referendum than the previous general election (IPSOS 2018). The referendum to repeal the 8th has passed, so what now for abortion access in Ireland? In the short term, the removal of the 8th amendment from the constitution does not mean the end of Ireland's near-total abortion ban, which is also sustained by legislation; removing the amendment will grant the Dáil much greater capacity to legislate on the issue. The government has promised to repeal the current legislative ban and replace it with a law that permits abortion on request up to 12 weeks and up to 24 weeks in exceptional circumstances (see Department of Health 2018). Because this draft legislation was introduced and widely debated during the referendum campaign, the vote to repeal has been interpreted politically to mean public support for the proposal. At the time of writing, the

government has signalled its intention to pass abortion legislation in the autumn of 2018. In the interim, detailed legal commentary of the proposed legislation and analysis of the post-repeal abortion landscape can be found at AboutThe8th.com.

In the wake of the referendum, the artworks discussed in this article might seem to be relics of a conservative, anti-abortion Ireland which was soundly rejected by the electorate. If the draft legislation is passed, it is true that a majority of women in Ireland who need terminations will be able to access them without travelling abroad. However, abortion travel will still remain a feature of abortion access in Ireland if the proposed law comes into force. Women who discover they are pregnant after 12 weeks and who want an abortion after 12 weeks but whose pregnancies do not meet the criteria for legal termination (among other groups) will still travel. The social stigma of abortion has certainly been eroded by the repeal campaign, but nonetheless remains for many women; women may still choose to travel some distance for abortion rather than seek care from their local doctor if they fear social repercussions or live in a small community without much privacy. Moreover, at the time of writing, abortion-travel is still a requirement for women in Northern Ireland who live under a near-total abortion ban. Northern Irish women can now access funding to cover the cost of abortion in England, although all but the very poorest must pay for their own travel and accommodation (UK Government 2018). The artworks discussed in this article strive to break abortion silences and re-frame abortion access as basic healthcare to which all women are entitled. Their message will continue to resonate across the island where abortion-travel will remain a necessity for the foreseeable future.

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